TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

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Materials from a special edition of the Italian magazine
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CONTENTS

Foreword by the Editor	5
The Position of Jews in Tsarist Russia	8
Jews in the USSR	15
The Jewish Autonomous Region	31
Participation of Jews in the Partisan Movement During the Great Patriotic War	44
The Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion	60
The Portrait of a Hero	63

Foreword by the Editor

This booklet is devoted to the position of Jews in the USSR. What prompted us to put out this booklet was the fact that May 7, 1984 marked the 50th anniversary of the Jewish Autonomous Region, the national-state formation of Jews in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). That was a very important occasion indeed. Many of our readers in the West probably do not even know that the Jewish Autonomous Region (JAR) [1] was formed in a scenic region of the Soviet Far East almost 15 years before the State of Israel came into being and has been making good progress ever since.

Soviet Jews who decided to settle in the Jewish Autonomous Region were far from being guided by a feeling of national exclusiveness or a desire to gain superiority over any other nationalities and ethnic groups. In Soviet conditions the formation of the JAR did not become a cause for fanning chauvinistic sentiment among Jews. This simply could not have happened. The emergence of the

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[1] The USSR consists of 15 Union Republics including 20 Autonomous Republics, 8 Autonomous Regions, and 10 Autonomous Areas.

national-state association of Soviet Jews in no way infringed on the territorial integrity of other Soviet national-state formations. No one was compelled to leave his home to settle in another part of the country. The rights of all nationalities and ethnic groups inhabiting areas adjacent to the JAR were strictly observed.

A practically unpopulated area was allotted for setting up the Jewish Autonomous Region. And it was done with the consent of the small number of indigenous inhabitants there.

Soviet Jews living and working in their national autonomous region have made big headway in various spheres: political, economic, cultural, and social. They are proud of their Jewish Autonomous Region which, together with the other regions, republics, and areas, makes up the great multinational Soviet homeland. Throughout the 50-year history of the Jewish Autonomous Region none of those living and working there has expressed a desire to emigrate.

The Jewish Autonomous Region is not a ghetto. No one has ever compelled Jews to move to the Region. All who went to live there had done so of their own free will. Those who did not feel like going to the new land were able to stay in places which suited their wishes and interests best of all. Jews live and work in all parts of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's nationalities policy has no place for territorial segregation of various groups of the population, for the separation of peoples from one another or for putting up various barriers between them. On the contrary, the material and legal conditions have been created for the development of all the nationalities and ethnic groups in the country. This promotes the further

consolidation of a new historical community—the Soviet people.

This approach to solving the nationalities problem is resented by those who have turned a legitimate feeling of national pride into uncompromising and blind nationalism and chauvinism, by those who believe in racial hierarchy and are motivated by the inhuman principle of national exclusiveness.

In its reports on the life of Jews in the Soviet Union the Western press introduces misinformation that is truly monstrous in its scope and is utterly unscrupulous. The old tales about Soviet "anti-Semitism" are being repeated time and again. It makes one wonder, however, how there can be "political discrimination" against Jews and at the same time broad participation of Jews in the life of Soviet society in every sphere and at every level. Citizens of Jewish nationality are members of the Communist Party, government and public organisations of the USSR and various republics, serve in the Armed Forces, and work in scientific and cultural institutions. Such broad participation of Jews in the country's life simply does not correspond with the tall tales about alleged discrimination and persecution of Jews in the USSR. The Zionists, proponents of the idea of racial exclusiveness and opponents of socialism have launched a rabid anti-Soviet campaign. They blatantly falsify even the simplest and easily verifiable facts with utter disregard of basic common sense. The Zionists are holding forth about Soviet "anti-Semitism" with a persistence worthy of a better cause. But this is not really surprising. The Soviet Union is a considerable obstacle in the way of their aggressive and expansionist policy. It is more difficult

to explain how some Western statesmen or public figures become mounthpieces of this infamous campaign of slander. One would have thought that they should reject such ideas because they run counter to their own views.

Considering the lack of truthful information on this subject in Western countries, we publish the following material taken from the Italian magazine *Calendario del popolo* of Milan.

The Position of Jews in Tsarist Russia

There were no large Jewish settlements in Russia in ancient times or in the Middle Ages. There is reason to believe, however, that Jews had inhabited the southwest of the Soviet Union's present territory for several centuries. Archaeological excavations show that Jews lived in Transcaucasia, in particular, in Mtskhet, the ancient capital of Georgia, already in the 1st and 2nd centuries A. D. Some of the Khazars, an ethnic group of Turkic origin inhabiting plains north of the Black and Caspian Seas, adopted Judaism in the 8th century.

The appearance of Jews in Kievan Rus and Lithuania dates back to the 9th and 10th centuries. In the 11th century there were Jewish communities in the Ukraine which was then under the rule of the Polish Kingdom. In the early 15th century they appeared in Byelorussia. The first evidence of the appearance of Jews in Muscovy dates back to 1474.

The Mongol and Tatar invasion of the Russian

principalities in 1243 caused most of the Jews to flee to Poland where they joined large Jewish communities.

As for the territories that later became part of the Russian Empire, it should be noted that the Jewish communities there were small and, of course, could not be compared to the Jewish communities in Poland which had full administrative autonomy from the late 15th century.

When the Ukraine was reunited with Russia in 1654 a considerable part of the Jewish population found itself under the rule of the Russian tsar.

As a result of the three partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793 and 1795 and the incorporation into Russia of South Ukraine and the Crimea captured from the Turks and Tatars in 1774 and 1783 respectively, Russia's Jewish population increased from several tens of thousands to nearly a million. These people knew nothing of Russian ways or culture. They spoke Yiddish and had been accustomed to living in separate communities for centuries. The autocratic government in Russia continued to tighten the screws, and discrimination against Jews was severe even in the reign of such "liberal" monarchs as Catherine II, Paul I and Alexander I [1]. What is more, to prevent the new subjects of Jewish nationality from settling throughout the Empire, the government in 1796 introduced the notorious Jewish Pale, an area within which Jews were allowed to live. The Pale covered territories in the West and South of the Ukraine, in Byelorussia and Lithuania. Only "local

[1] Catherine II (1729-1796), empress of Russia from 1762; Paul I (1754-1801), emperor of Russia from 1796; Alexander I (1777-1825), emperor of Russia from 1801. (Here and further on notes are provided by the editor.)

Jews" were allowed to settle in Latvia, in the Caucasus and in Central Asia. As the Russian Empire later expanded, more lands inhabited by Jews were included in the Pale which existed until 1917. Only some categories of Jews were allowed to live outside the Pale such as people with a specialised or higher education, merchants of the first guild, craftsmen, soldiers and their offspring.

Jews living in the Russian Empire had been engaged in various crafts since olden times. In most cases, however, they were hotel owners or wine merchants. A decree issued by Alexander I in 1804 forbade Jews to sell alcoholic beverages. They were encouraged to take up various crafts, farming, and factory jobs. Young Jews were allowed to study at the universities. The teaching of European languages in Jewish schools was made obligatory, and Jews were allowed to settle in the Ukraine. However, many good intentions failed to materialise. When by a decision of the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) Russia received a large part of Poland in 1815 and the country's Jewish population reached two million, the Jews lost even the few rights and ephemeral freedoms they had previously enjoyed. However, Alexander II [1] had had to abandon the policy of the forcible assimilation of Jews at the very start of his reign. Compelled to abolish serfdom [2], the "Liberator Tsar" issued decrees on equal conditions of the call-up for military service for Jews and people of other nationalities. Among other things, the decrees confirmed the right of Jews to "take part in all public functions without any restriction of residence" pro-

[1] Alexander II (1818-1881), emperor of Russia from 1855.
[2] Serfdom was abolished in Russia in 1861.

vided they had the necessary education; under certain conditions Jewish craftsmen were permitted to leave the Pale and settle in other places freely. That modest "liberalisation" characteristic of the first years of the reign of Alexander II ended in the late 1860s.

On Easter Sunday, March 28, 1871, a mob of hoodlums staged a bloody pogrom in Odessa, a major city on the Black Sea coast. According to an eyewitness account, it was incited by a handful of people who made skilful use of the local people's religious fanaticism. Rumours were spread that Jews had thrown stones at Christian believers during a service and even fired shots at them wounding several people. It was also said that Jews drove their cattle to a Russian cemetery and had broken a cross on an Orthodox church. Slander fell on fertile ground: the mob was credulous and easily deceived by the rumours, although no one could say that he had himself witnessed the things that supposedly took place.

When Alexander III [1], the son of Alexander II, ascended the throne in 1881, a period of extreme political reaction set in, and Jews were among its many victims. One of the pretexts for unleashing repressions against Jews was also the fact that there was a Jewish girl among the members of the *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will) [2] group who assassinated Alexander II on March 1, 1881.

A month and a half after the assassination of Alexander II there was a violent Jewish pogrom

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[1] Alexander III (1845-1894), emperor of Russia from 1881.

[2] *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will) was a secret organisation that conducted revolutionary propaganda among the people.

in Yelisavetgrad [1], which also coincided with Orthodox Easter celebrations. A wave of pogroms swept Kiev and nearby districts, Chernigov, Kherson, Berdichev and Odessa. Following a lull of several weeks there were pogroms near Poltava in the Ukraine, in Lithuania and Byelorussia. The method used was the same everywhere. Agents provocateur spread rumours about atrocities allegedly committed by Jews (ritual murder, defiling the relics of Christian saints and other sacrileges). This aroused general indignation which erupted into violence: fist fights, looting, setting houses, shops and synagogues on fire, beatings, rape, and murder. Usually the pogroms lasted for two or three days and with every day the wild mob grew in size and became more and more brutal. When violence reached a peak, the police and troops would step in to restore order. Those found guilty of acts of violence usually went unpunished or got away with only token punishment.

Jews were subjected to even harsher oppression when Vyacheslav Pleve was appointed Minister of Internal Affairs in 1889. The end of the reign of Alexander III was marked by more evictions of Jews both inside the Pale, as for instance in Yalta, and outside it. All told, more than 65 anti-Semitic decrees were adopted in the reign of Alexander III.

Conditions became even more difficult for Jews after Nicholas II, the last Russian tsar, ascended the throne in 1894. Persecution of Jews became part of government policy and there were systematic pogroms and reprisals. Minister Pleve remained the architect and executor of that policy.

There was a direct connection between the in-

[1] Now Kirovograd, a city in the Ukraine.

tensified persecution of Jews and the social and economic situation in the Russian Empire. The late 19th century saw the emergence of an industrial working class which steadily grew in number and became more and more revolutionary-minded and militant. The government sought to hold back the revolutionary movement by channelling popular discontent against the Jews, blaming them for social crises and instigating acts of violence against them.

The leader of the Russian Communists, Vladimir Lenin, creatively developing the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, elaborated a whole theory on the nationalities question. He defined the scientific principles of the Communist Party's policy on the nationalities question, which ensured genuine equality and prosperity of the more than 100 nations and ethnic groups inhabiting the USSR.

Lenin described anti-Semitism as a "despicable attempt of the government and the exploiting classes to exacerbate racial particularism and national enmity". Lenin emphasised that anti-Semitism had been brought forth by the capitalist class and the ruling elite for the purpose of attaining their reactionary objectives. "Vile instigation," in Lenin's words, "bribery and fuddling with drink of the scum of our cursed capitalist 'civilisation', the brutal massacre of unarmed by armed people, and farcical trials conducted by the culprits themselves"—that was how Jewish pogroms were incited, carried out and dealt with. A deliberate policy and a carefully devised plan lay behind all this.

As Lenin said:

"The schools, the press, the parliamentary rostrum—everything is being used to sow ignorant, savage, and vicious hatred of the Jews.

"This dirty and despicable work is undertaken, not only by the scum of the Black Hundreds, but also by reactionary professors, scholars, journalists and members of the Duma. Millions and thousands of millions of roubles are spent on poisoning the minds of the people."

The ascension to the throne of Nicholas II was marked by a series of brutal Jewish pogroms—in Spole (near Kiev) in February 1897; in Nikolaev on Easter Sunday 1899; and a particularly savage pogrom in Kishinev on April 6, 1903. There were more pogroms in cities with a Jewish population in the years 1903 and 1904.

When the First Russian bourgeois democratic revolution of 1905-07 broke out, the situation in the country became extremely tense. Monarchist organisations and the police, acting with the approval of the tsarist government, set up terrorist gangs known as the Black Hundreds to counter the revolutionary movement. The Black Hundreds attacked, looted, beat up and killed people who were not to the liking of the tsarist government, including Jews. From October 18 to 29, 1905, bloody pogroms were staged in 50 cities with 800 people killed and 700 injured. Material damage was put at 60 million roubles. Three hundred Jews died in a pogrom in Odessa alone. Acts of violence against Jews without causing loss of human life occurred in another 700 populated areas.

To fight the widespread discontent in the country the tsarist regime began to look for a scapegoat. So when the revolutionary movement was on the upsurge again, the tsarist government began to publicise the so-called "Beilis case" in an attempt to divert the attention of the mass of the people from the revolutionary struggle and direct their

anger towards the Jews. In 1911 the body of a child from a Christian family, the Yutshinskys, was found in Kiev. Suspicion fell on M. Beilis, a Jew, who was accused of killing the child for ritual purposes, but the investigation failed to produce any evidence of his guilt. Nevertheless, the government decided to capitalise on the whole affair and turned it into a much publicised trial of a Jew charged with ritual murder. The investigation was resumed and Beilis was again brought to court. The trial took place in 1913 amidst opposition from the democratic public, workers and revolutionaries and protest demonstrations took place in many cities. Communists marched in the front ranks of those protesting against the government's provocation. Vladimir Lenin referred to the Beilis case several times in his works while exposing the tsardom.

Under public pressure the tsarist government was compelled to abandon its schemes. Beilis was acquitted in October 1913.

The Beilis case was the last attack among many actions launched by the tsarist autocratic regime against the Jews. With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, it turned its attention to other problems. The 1917 Socialist Revolution once and for all ended all forms of discrimination against the Jews and the other ethnic groups in Russia.

Jews in the USSR

The 1917 Great October Socialist Revolution radically changed the position of the Jews in what used to be the Russian Empire. It gave freedom and equality to the Jews and other nations and ethnic groups and provided conditions for the all-

round development of their cultures. Already after the 1917 February bourgeois democratic revolution[1], which overthrew the tsarist autocracy, the equality of the Jews with the rest of the country's population was officially proclaimed. The humiliating restrictions against the Jews were abolished, and so was the notorious Jewish Pale. Actually, however, the Jews enjoyed equal rights only with the victory of the 1917 Socialist Revolution. Eight days after the victory the head of the Soviet government Vladimir Lenin signed the Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia. It proclaimed the equality and sovereignty of all the peoples of the country, their right to free self-determination including secession and the formation of independent states. It abolished all privileges and restrictions based on nationality or religion and declared the right to the free development of all the small nationalities and ethnic groups of Russia. Moreover, a decree on freedom of conscience was adopted in the first months of Soviet government on Lenin's initiative. The decree provided for the separation of the Church from the State and of the School from the Church. That made it possible to remove one of the main obstacles in the way towards genuine equality of the Jews. The Jews, like the other ethnic groups which had the status of religious communities in tsarist Russia, received the legal status of an ethnic minority.

Article 22 of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic's Constitution adopted by the 5th

[1] According to the calendar used in Russia prior to February 1918, the February Revolution took place on February 23-27 (March 8-12 according to the modern calendar). The October Revolution was accomplished on October 25 (November 7) 1917.

All-Russia Congress of Soviets on July 10, 1918 said: "Recognising the equality of citizens regardless of their race or nationality, the RSFSR declares the preservation of privileges or any advantages on grounds of race or nationality and the oppression of national minorities or restriction of their equality to be incompatible with the Fundamental Law of the Republic."

However, the position of the Jews remained extremely difficult during the Civil War of 1918-20 in areas controlled by the White Guard counter-revolutionary forces.[1] They were subjected to a series of bloody pogroms. To put an end to that and to mobilise all resources for the protection of the Jews the Soviet government decided to take a number of urgent steps. At a meeting of the Council of People's Commissars[2] on July 25, 1918 Lenin made a report on a draft address of the Council opposing the Jewish pogroms. The address was adopted unanimously and published in the official government newspaper *Izvestia VTSIK*.[3]

The Revolution offered the Jews protection from all forms of persecution and discrimination. The Soviet government did not merely proclaim the legal equality of the Jews with the rest of the citizens. It sought to translate this equality into prac-

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[1] The monarchist counter-revolutionary forces were called the White Guards as opposed to the revolutionary Red Guards of workers and soldiers.

[2] The Council of People's Commissars was the Soviet government elected by the 2nd All-Russia Congress of Soviets on October 26 (November 8), 1917. It was headed by Lenin.

[3] VTSIK is the Russian acronym for the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the supreme government body of the RSFSR elected at the 2nd All-Russia Congress of Soviets.

tice. For instance, for the first time in history the criminal codes of the Union Republics provided for stiff penalties for any attempt to sow racial hatred or hostility among nationalities as well as for hurting anyone's national dignity.

Rejection of any form of racism, racial and national discrimination, was set down in the 1936 USSR Constitution.

The same key provisions are contained in the present USSR Constitution adopted on October 7, 1977.[1] Article 34 of the Constitution reads:

"Citizens of the USSR are equal before the law, without distinction of origin, social or property status, race or nationality, sex, education, language, attitude to religion, type and nature of occupation, domicile, or other status.

"The equal rights of citizens of the USSR are guaranteed in all fields of economic, political, social, and cultural life."

The principle of the equality of all nationalities is defined in greater detail and in more concrete terms in Article 36 of the Constitution. It says:

"Citizens of the USSR of different races and nationalities have equal rights.

"Exercise of these rights is ensured by a policy of all-round development and drawing together of all the nations and nationalities of the USSR, by educating citizens in the spirit of Soviet patriotism and socialist internationalism, and by the possibility to use their native language and the languages of other peoples of the USSR.

"Any direct or indirect limitation of the rights

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[1] Corresponding articles are also included in the Constitutions of the 15 Union Republics and the Constitutions of the 20 Autonomous Republics of the USSR.

of citizens or establishment of direct or indirect privileges on grounds of race or nationality, and any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness, hostility or contempt, are punishable by law."

The great revolutionary changes in the Soviet land also directly influenced the social structure of the Jewish population. In the years of industrialisation[1] the number of Jewish industrial workers increased from 153,000 in December 1926 to 565,000 in 1935. By 1939 their number reached 689,000. In 1935 30 per cent of the Jewish population were office employees. While before the Revolution Jews usually worked in offices as accountants or shop assistants, the establishment of Soviet power enabled them to work in key sectors of the national economy, such as industry, transport, construction, state and cooperative trade. More and more Jews worked in the agricultural sector: the number of Jews working on farms more than doubled from 1925 to 1935, increasing from 111,000 to 270,000. Jews could now enter professions from which they were barred before the Revolution. For instance, they could become officers in the Red Army. Many of them were decorated with orders and medals and received top military ranks for exemplary service. And unlimited opportunities were opened to Jews in the fields of education and culture.

According to the latest census taken in 1979, there were 1,811,000 Jews in the Soviet Union, or 0.69 per cent of the total population (in 1926 there were 2,672,000 Jews, or 1.8 per cent of the total;

[1] The building up of a modern powerful industry in order to restructure the entire USSR's economy carried out during the first prewar five-year plans (1929-1940).

in 1970 there were 2,151,000, or 0.9 per cent of the total). The decrease in the number of Jews as compared with 1926 was partly due to the fact that many Jews were killed by the Nazis, as well as to assimilation which is only natural in a country with more than a hundred nationalities and ethnic groups and without any barriers to mixed marriages. Soviet people themselves choose what nationality to take proceeding from the nationality of their parents. The decline in the number of Jews from 1970 to 1979 was both a result of assimilation or emigration with the purpose of being reunited with their families abroad.

Most of the Jews in the Soviet Union live in large cities such as Moscow (which ranks fourth in the world in the number of residents of Jewish nationality—288,000—after New York, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem), Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, Vilnius, Kishinev, Odessa, Riga, Tbilisi, Tashkent, Sverdlovsk, Irkutsk and Novosibirsk. In some of the cities Jews account for 3 to 4 per cent of all residents (Moscow, Leningrad); in others they make up 12 to 15 per cent (Odessa, Kishinev).

The Jewish population in the USSR is not a homogeneous one. Besides the large groups of Jews living in the Russian Federation, the Ukraine, Byelorussia, and the Republics on the Baltic Sea coast there are also Georgian Jews and Bukhara Jews in Uzbekistan.

Soviet Jews play a notable role in every sphere of political and economic life as well as in science, art and literature. They are widely represented both in the country's government and in the governments of the Union and Autonomous Republics as well as in various state and Party bodies.

Of the 18 million members of the Soviet Communist Party 257,620, or 1.4 per cent, are Jews. This fact is of no small importance. And the figure becomes even more impressive if we recall the percentage of Party members among the total Jewish population in the USSR. While the Soviet Communist Party accounts for 6.8 per cent of the country's total population, Party members of Jewish nationality make up 14.2 per cent of all Jews in the Soviet Union.

As has been pointed out, Jews take part in the work of government bodies at all levels. In the latest parliamentary elections in 1984 eight citizens of Jewish nationality were elected to the USSR Supreme Soviet.[1]

These are:

— the writer Alexander Chakovsky (b. 1913), Editor-in-Chief of the weekly *Literaturnaya Gazeta*[2], Secretary of the Board of the Union of Writers of the USSR, a member of the Soviet Committee for the Defence of Peace, and an alternate member of the CPSU Central Committee. Chakovsky has been awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labour; he has been decorated with four Orders of Lenin, Orders of the October Revolution, the Red Banner of Labour, and the Red Star. He

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[1] The USSR Supreme Soviet (the Soviet Parliament) is the country's highest body of state authority. It was set up for the first time in conformity with the USSR Constitution of 1936.

[2] *Literaturnaya Gazeta* is published by the Board of the Union of Writers of the USSR which has about 9,000 members. The Union puts out more than 100 newspapers, weeklies and magazines and has its own publishing houses–the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* and *Sovietsky Pisatel* (Soviet Writer)–as well as publishing houses in the various republics.

is also a winner of the Lenin and State Prizes of the USSR;

— Veniamin Dymshits (b. 1910), a Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. He has been a member of the Soviet government for many years, a member of the CPSU since 1937, and is a member of the Central Committee of the CPSU. He has been awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labour and is the winner of several USSR State Prizes. He has been decorated with several Soviet orders;

— Rakhil Geller (b. 1937), a factory worker, and a member of the USSR Supreme Soviet from the Jewish Autonomous Region. She is not a Party member;

— Yuli Khariton (b. 1904), a scientist working in the field of experimental and theoretical physics, a member of the USSR Academy of Sciences since 1953, a member of the CPSU since 1956, three times named Hero of Socialist Labour, has been elected a deputy of the USSR Supreme Soviet since 1950; decorated with several Soviet orders;

— Meyer Katz (b. 1923), since 1958 chairman of a co-operative farm named after the Red Army in Vitebsk Region in Byelorussia, a member of the CPSU since 1952, and a member of the Auditing Commission of the Communist Party of Byelorussia. He has been awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labour; decorated with the Orders of Lenin, the October Revolution, and the Red Banner of Labour. He was elected for the first time to the USSR Supreme Soviet of the 11th convocation;

— Yakov Plitman (b. 1933), a member of the CPSU since 1959, chairman of the Kuibishev co-operative farm in the Ukraine since 1972; for the

first time elected to the USSR Supreme Soviet in 1984;

— Lev Volodarsky (b. 1911), professor, D. Sc. (Economics), head of the USSR Central Board of Statistics, a member of the CPSU since 1939, a member of the Party Central Committee;

— Lev Shapiro (b. 1927), a member of the CPSU since 1959, First Secretary of the Regional Committee of the CPSU of the Jewish Autonomous Region since 1970, an alternate member of the CPSU Central Committee and a deputy of the USSR Supreme Soviet since 1974.

There are 24 deputies of Jewish nationality in the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics and 10 in the Supreme Soviets of the Autonomous Republics. Some 4,000 Jews are members of regional, city, district, and rural Soviets (councils). Jews make up 5.3 per cent of Soviet scientists, about 6 per cent of cultural workers, artists, writers, and newsmen; 3.4 per cent of health service workers, and approximately 6 per cent of workers in the country's judicial system. Their work has won nationwide appreciation. From 1941 to 1981 Jews were winners of 142 Lenin Prizes out of a total of 1,347 (or 10.5 per cent), and of 1,694 State Prizes out of a total of 14,476 (or 11.7 per cent).

Hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews have been decorated with the country's orders and medals for their labour exploits and active participation in its political, economic, social, and cultural life. Eighty Soviet citizens of Jewish nationality have been awarded the highest decoration for their work—the title of Hero of Socialist Labour.

Jews in the USSR lead an active cultural life. In 1984 the *Russkiy Yazyk* publishing house in

Moscow put out a Russian-Jewish (Yiddish) dictionary, with an initial printing of 20,000 copies. "For us, there is nothing extraordinary in it," said Khaim Beidar, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the Moscow-based Yiddish-language magazine *Sovietish Heimland* (Soviet Homeland), in an interview with a correspondent of *Calendario del popolo*. "The first Russian-Jewish (Yiddish) dictionary was published in 1869, when Yiddish was just becoming a literary language. The dictionary contained a wealth of terms on various subjects and fields of knowledge of those days. Another dictionary edited by Dreizin came out in 1909. The 1917 Socialist Revolution provided access to culture to the broad mass of working people of all nationalities. So there was a great need for a new dictionary, which came out in 1941 in Moscow. It was edited by Falkovich, and it proved very useful for primary school pupils. In recent years both Russian and Yiddish have been enriched with a vast amount of new words and expressions, and so it became necessary to publish a new dictionary, a modern one, which would be useful for a very wide range of readers, including those just starting to learn Yiddish. There are now new tasks, new requirements, and this is what led to the publication of this completely new dictionary."

The new Russian-Jewish (Yiddish) dictionary is based on the Russian language as a means of communication among the peoples and ethnic groups of the Soviet Union. It gives the reader a clear picture of present-day literary Yiddish, contains extensive commentaries on Yiddish grammar, and considers various issues of the development of the Yiddish language and culture.

In this connection one more point needs to be

stressed. In capitalist countries one can hear time and again loud protests from the so-called "defenders of Soviet Jews" who accuse the Soviet authorities of hampering the development of Jewish culture which, in their opinion, can find full expression only in Hebrew. However, neither in pre-revolutionary Russia nor in the Soviet Union had the Jews ever used this language, which was revived in the last century and made the official language of the State of Israel. In the Soviet Union Hebrew is used chiefly in the synagogues. Yiddish has always been the native language of Russian and Soviet Jews. And it has nothing in common with Hebrew, a language which is absolutely foreign both to the culture and traditions of Soviet Jews. According to statistics, some 14 per cent of Soviet Jews today consider Yiddish their native language.

A vast number of very different books are published in the Soviet Union in Yiddish, and quite a few Soviet writers write in this language. As mentioned earlier, the Yiddish literary monthly *Sovietish Heimland* is published in Moscow. Its editorial office is located in Kirov Street, in the very heart of Moscow, and the Editor-in-Chief is the well-known Soviet writer Aaron Vergelis. Founded in 1961, the magazine has published dozens of novels and plays and thousands of stories and poems. Since January 1980 every issue on sale or mailed to subscribers is accompanied by a book, a literary supplement. These supplements form the "Library of Sovietish Heimland". According to Aaron Vergelis, who is in charge of this series, it will include works by Note Luryer (from Odessa), Khaim Gurevich (from Siberia), Ikhil Shraibman (from Moldavia), Grigory Polianker (from the Ukraine), Bouzi Miller (from the Jewish Autono-

mous Region), Samuil Gordon (from Moscow), and many other Soviet authors. The monthly publishes many poems and gives special attention to budding young authors, particularly those who have recently graduated from the Yiddish Department of the College of Literature in Moscow.

One of the issues of *Sovietish Heimland* was devoted completely to the 125th birth anniversary of one of the classics of Jewish literature, Solomon Rabinowitz (1859-1916), widely known under his pen-name Shalom Aleichem, the author of such works as *The Adventures of Menachem-Mendl* and *The Tevye Stories and Others.*

Literary works in Yiddish are published regularly in the Soviet Union. Nearly 300 books have been published since 1967 with a total printing of more than two million copies. We should like to single out the novels and stories by such writers as Note Luryer, Iosif Rabin, Ikhil Falikman, Natan Zabara, Grigory Polianker, Idik Kipnis, Ikhil Shraibman, Irma Drouker, Kira Gorkhman, Rivka Rubina, and Alexander Gubnitsky, as well as poems by Aaron Vergelis, Abram Gontar, Ovsey Driz, Moisei Taif, Dora Hakina, Riva Balyasnaya, Mendel Lifshitz, Matvei Talalaevsky. Twenty-four novels in Yiddish came out in large editions in 1980 alone.

Works by Jewish writers are accessible not only to a narrow circle of the Yiddish-speaking people. They are translated into Russian and the languages of other peoples of the Soviet Union. Over the past 15 years alone 150 works by Jewish authors have come out in Russian in editions totalling more than 30 million copies. Books by Jewish classics are in high demand in the Soviet Union. For instance, works by Shalom Aleichem

have been translated into the languages of 24 peoples and ethnic groups of the Soviet Union and their total edition runs into nearly 10 million copies. On the initiative of the USSR Writers' Union a number of works by Shalom Aleichem were staged in theatres to mark his 125th birth anniversary. The Sovietsky Pisatel Publishing House in Moscow has put out a new collection of works by Shalom Aleichem. We might also mention that works by Itsik Perets have undergone 50 editions and those by Mendel Moikher-Sforim, 30 editions.

Jewish theatres giving performances in Yiddish are very popular, especially the theatrical companies of Moscow, Birobijan, Vilnius and Kaunas. Particularly well known in the Soviet Union is the Jewish Chamber Music Theatre, which was founded in 1980.

The composers Lev Yampolsky, Lev Pulver, Mikhail Milner, Zinovy Kompaneyets, Riva Boyarskaya, Samuil Senderey, Otilia Likhtenshtein, Modest Tabachnikov, and Lev Birov and Solomon Faintukh have made a notable contribution to Soviet musical culture. One of them, Zinovy Kompaneyets, well known both in the Soviet Union and abroad, has been working in the field of music for 50 years now. He has written many rhapsodies and also vocal music, has done much to popularise Jewish national music. His collection *New Jewish Songs* is an excellent anthology of works by Soviet Jewish composers written over the past few years.

The number of Jews enrolled in institutions of higher learning in proportion to the Jewish population in the country is one of the highest in the whole of the USSR. It comes to 3.3 per cent, while the figure for the Russians, Ukrainians and Byelo-

Russians is two per cent. Forty-five per cent of Jews engaged in research work have a university education. Quite a few scientists of Jewish nationality are internationally known. Among them are the late theoretical physicists Lev Landau and Abram Ioffe, chemist Semyon Volfkovich, historian Isaac Mintz, a Nobel Prize winner, economist Leonid Kantorovich, physicist Bentsion Vul, mathematician Izrail Gelfand, chemists Alexander Grinberg and Alexander Frumkin, and nuclear physicists Yuli Khariton and Yakov Zeldovich.

And it should also be remembered that the percentage of Jews with a higher education in the Soviet Union is bigger than in any other country, including Israel.

The position of Jews in the USSR who profess Judaism deserves special attention. In pre-revolutionary Russia Judaism was the religion of an oppressed and persecuted minority. After the victory of the Socialist Revolution of 1917 it was on an equal footing with all the other religious beliefs. It is not discriminated against; nor does it have any privileges. The Decree on the Separation of the Church from the State (January 1918), signed by Lenin, opened the road to genuine freedom of conscience for all, both believers and non-believers, Jews and non-Jews. Believers were allowed to perform their religious rites, while atheists were free to express their views on religion without, however, hurting the believers' religious feelings. What is more, citizens were no longer required to indicate their religion in official documents. Naturally enough, this new situation led not only to emancipation of religion but also to emancipation from religion—the number of believers started to

decline rapidly. (This tendency is rather typical of modern society as a whole.)

Believers are not registered in the USSR—citizens are not classified according to their attitudes to religion. Therefore to get an idea about the spread of Judaism, let us look at the attendance of religious institutions, the synagogues in our case. For instance, a sociological survey conducted in the town of Bobruisk (Byelorussia) several years ago showed that only two per cent of the polled Jews said they were believers. This two per cent includes those who come to the synagogue mostly on big Jewish holidays (the New Year, Yom Kippur, Passover). A similar sociological survey conducted in the city of Novosibirsk (Western Siberia) during a religious holiday has shown that between 100 and 200 Jews come to the synagogue out of the total of 11,000 living in the city (or 1 to 2 per cent); in Kuibishev the synagogue is attended by 150 to 450 Jews out of 16,000 (or 1 to 3 per cent); and in Leningrad, 2,500 out of 160,000 (or 1.5 per cent). One should bear in mind of course that in all probability not all who are believers go to the synagogue just as not all those who go to the synagogue are believers in the full sense of the word. It should also be pointed out that Soviet followers of Judaism belong to various ethnic groups. For instance, the percentage of believers is greater among the Georgian and Bukhara Jews. Thus, in Tbilisi, a city with as many Jews as in Kuibishev, synagogue attendance on religious holidays is 8 to 10 times larger. In some areas the number of believers reach 20 per cent, but the countrywide average of Jews professing Judaism does not exceed 3.5 per cent.

At present 92 synagogues function in the Soviet

Union. Eighty of them use state-owned buildings which have been handed over for the use of the believers free of charge and for an unlimited period of time. In areas where the number of believers does not exceed 30 there are minyans and congregations gathering on big religious holidays. Some of the synagogues (as, for instance, the one in Sverdlovsk) had to be converted into minyans because the number of attendants was under 30. And wherever there are more believers there are also more synagogues. Georgia, for instance, has 26 synagogues (28 per cent of all synagogues in the Soviet Union).

Every year, shortly before the feast of Passover, the religious communities prepare matzoth which can be obtained at the synagogue. For instance, the Moscow Choral Synagogue prepares 100 tons of matzoth every year. The synagogues also have premises for cutting poultry and store-rooms for kosher meat as well as kosher dining-rooms.

Jewish believers in the USSR have no central administrative religious body. But the Moscow Choral Synagogue serves as the spiritual centre of all the Judaistic religious communities in the USSR. After the death of Yakov Fishman, its Chief Rabbi is Adolf Shaevich who received his religious education at the Moscow yeshiva and at the Higher Rabbinical School in Budapest. The head of the Moscow Jewish community is Boris Gramm. Every year the synagogue publishes religious calendars. In 1979 it published the *Pentateuch,* the first five books of the Old Testament, and in 1980—the book of prayers *Sidras,* edited and supplied with commentaries by the late Chief Rabbi of the Moscow synagogue, Yehuda Leib Levin.

The Jewish Autonomous Region

The Jewish Autonomous Region is situated in a picturesque part of the Soviet Far East, in the Khabarovsk Territory.[1] The tributaries of the big Amur river—the Bira and Bijan—meet here at the foot of the Little Khingan Mountain Range. And it is those two rivers that gave their names to the Region's administrative centre.

The decision to set up the Jewish Autonomous Region within the Russian Federation (RSFSR) was adopted by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on May 7, 1934:

"Taking into account the rapid economic development of the Biro-Bijan District, the Presidium of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee resolves:

"(1) That the Biro-Bijan District be made an autonomous Jewish national region, with its centre in the workers' settlement of Birobijan, which is part of the Far Eastern Territory.

"(2) That the autonomous Jewish national region be granted all rights established by existing legislation for autonomous regions within the RSFSR."

The Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR[2], Mikhail Kalinin, explained

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[1] Administratively, the USSR is divided into 123 regions and 6 territories including districts, cities, settlements, hamlets and villages.

[2] The Central Executive Committee of the USSR was the highest body of state authority in the country in 1922-38. The corresponding body in the RSFSR was the All-Russia Central Executive Committee.

the reasons for the decision of the highest body of state authority to set up the JAR within the Russian Federation as follows: "The government decision to make the Birobijan district of the Far Eastern Territory an Autonomous Jewish Region was not a mere gesture. Making the Birobijan district an autonomous region is of major economic significance for a rich and completely undeveloped area which has large deposits of ores, immense forest tracts and all other resources, including gold."

The First Regional Congress of Soviets of the JAR opened in Birobijan on December 18, 1934. The formation of the Jewish Autonomous Region completed a process started by the Soviet government in previous years. That process had taken place in full accordance with Lenin's theory on solving the nationalities question, which was elaborated long before the 1917 Socialist Revolution.

Thus even on May 11, 1919 the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) [1] adopted a decision on taking all the necessary steps to improve the position of the Jews by giving the mass of the Jewish working people access to employment in the agricultural sector while, at the same time, launching a vigorous struggle against anti-Semitism. On July 12, 1919 the People's Commissariat for Agriculture adopted a decision on taking further measures to enable Jews to engage in farming by setting up Jewish agricultural communes and co-operatives.

Later, in August 1924, it was decided to set up

[1] In 1918 the RSDLP (Bolsheviks) became the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). That was how the Soviet Communist Party was called in 1918-25.

a committee to facilitate the effort of the Jewish working people in developing new lands. The committee was under the Soviet of Nationalities [1] of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR. It was known by its Russian acronym KOMZET, or KOMERD in Yiddish. Among its members were such prominent political leaders as, for instance, Chairman of the USSR Central Executive Committee Mikhail Kalinin, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Georgy Chicherin, and People's Commissar for Foreign Trade Leonid Krasin. Along with that, a public organisation was set up for the same purpose. It was called the Society for the Development of New Lands by the Jewish Working People, OZET in Russian, or GEZERD in Yiddish.

Under the supervision of those two bodies surveys were made of lands which would be suitable for the settlement of Jews. Originally, the choice fell on the Crimea and the Ukraine, but the scheme had to be abandoned because those areas were densely populated from olden times. Then, attention was turned to the vast tracts of land in the South of the Soviet Far East along the left bank of the Amur river. The area was practically unpopulated (a little more than a thousand nomads—the Tunguses [2] and the Golds [3] — lived there), and the natural conditions were exceptionally favourable: there were vast forest areas, rivers, mountain ranges, and

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[1] The USSR Central Executive Committee had two equal chambers: the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities.

[2] Tunguses is the old name of the Evenks living mainly in the Evenk Autonomous Area.

[3] Golds is the old name of the Nanais living in Khabarovsk Territory.

fertile valleys. The forest is like a park in a fairy-tale. The northern silver fir, cedar and larch, the southern wild grapes, the Amur cork tree, the birch, the lime tree, and the regal lotus all grow there. The forests occupying a third of the region's territory abound in various mushrooms, nuts and berries. Add to this mink, otter, sable, kolinsky, wild boar, elk, Siberian stag, reindeer, bear, fox, pheasant, and hazel-grouse as well as the Amur tigers which are still found in these parts. There are one hundred and six species of fish in the Amur and its tributaries—from trout to the great Siberian sturgeon which may be five metres long and weigh up to a ton. The land also is rich in minerals including tin, iron ore, coal, marble and gold.

After it had been confirmed by several scientific expeditions that those lands could be successfully developed, the Presidium of the USSR Central Executive Committee decreed in March 1928: "... to allot for settlement by working Jews available lands along the Amur in the Far Eastern Territory, including the Birobijan district, roughly within the following boundaries: along the Amur river, west of the city of Khabarovsk as far as the mouth of the Khingan river and along the Khingan river as far as the railway; further, north of the Urmi and Tunguska rivers, and eastward up to a line west of Khabarovsk... If settlement of the area is successful, working Jews should be given the opportunity to organise in the said area a Jewish national administrative and territorial entity."

The settling down in the new lands proceeded on a strictly voluntary basis. The settlers were given all possible assistance. The government supplied those wishing to move to the Birobijan dis-

trict with the necessary equipment, building materials and means of transportation, to say nothing of financial aid.

There were not only Jews who moved to the new lands from the country's older regions. Among the newcomers were Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians wishing to live and work in those parts. Everyone chose the place where he would like to make his home: some preferred to be near the Trans-Siberian Railway, while others went to the plains and river banks where old settlements already stood. New populated centres also emerged. The small railway junction of Tikhonkaya of the Trans-Siberian mainline soon became a settlement around which the town of Birobijan, the region's administrative and industrial centre, came into being. The town of Obluchye and the large settlements of Waldheim and Amurzet grew on what used to be wasteland.

Success in the development of the new lands exceeded the most optimistic forecasts. Despite many difficulties (the whole project was one of developing practically unexplored lands), by the time the Birobijan district was made the Jewish Autonomous Region its population topped 50,000. The settlers had ploughed up 40,000 hectares of farmland and built a number of factories and plants.

Today the Jewish Autonomous Region is a highly developed industrial and farming area. Communal services are noticeably improving and living standards steadily rising. The Jewish Autonomous Region, with an area of 36,000 square kilometres, is bigger than Belgium, somewhat smaller than Denmark, the Netherlands or Switzerland, and nearly twice as big as Israel. The region comprises

five districts, two towns and twelve urban-type settlements and has a population of 204,000 (1984). (It had 52,000 residents in 1934, 113,000 in 1940, 163,000 in 1965, 172,500 in 1970 and 190,000 in 1979.) The number of Jews in proportion to the rest of the population in the region (18 per cent) is greater than in any other part of the Soviet Union. The Jewish Autonomous Region holds sixth place in the Soviet Union for the number of citizens of Jewish origin (36,000), after the Russian Federation, the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Uzbekistan and Moldavia.

The population of the Jewish Autonomous Region also includes Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Moldavians and representatives of other nationalities of the Soviet Union. There is complete mutual understanding between them so that racial discrimination and national conflicts are absent here as they are in the rest of the Soviet Union. People of all nationalities make their contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of the Region.

The Jewish Autonomous Region manufactures crawler combine harvesters, powerful transformers, furniture, paper, footwear and knitwear and produces cement, lime, timber, and large quantities of tin.

The region has 35 state farms,[1] two collective farms,[2] many poultry farms and apiaries and two

[1] State farm is a state-owned socialist agricultural enterprise.

[2] Collective farm is an agricultural cooperative which unites farmers on a voluntary basis for running a large-scale socialist enterprise. Its members elect a governing board and its chairman and are guided in their work by the Collective Farm Rules. They work on land granted to the collective farm by the state for free use in perpetuity.

big fisheries. It accounts for 40 per cent of the total farm produce of the Khabarovsk Territory.

The region's biggest enterprise is the Far Eastern Farm Machinery Plant (Dalselmash), located in Birobijan. Dalselmash is the Soviet Union's only manufacturer of crawler combines for harvesting rice and other grain crops. Dalselmash harvesters are used on the fields of Siberia, Kazakhstan, the Baltic Republics and other parts of the Soviet Union. They are exported to Argentina, Mexico, Iraq, Iran, Bulgaria, Hungary, Vietnam, Cuba and other countries. The plant is being constantly expanded and modernised. Its output has grown by 40 per cent since the plant was put into operation, largely thanks to the introduction of advanced technologies, including control with the help of computers.

No less important for the country are the large-capacity transformers built at the Power Transformer Plant in Birobijan. Its transformers are in great demand all over the Soviet Union. The plant's annual output is equal to that of the whole electric-engineering industry of the Russian Federation in 1940.

Large deposits of tin were discovered in the northeast of the region before the Second World War. The town of Khingansk has become a centre of tin mining and processing. A large workers' settlement has risen around a cement mill in the town of Teploozersk, which turns out a million tons of cement a year and plays an important role in the economy of the Soviet Far East.

Transport facilities in the region have grown considerably. The territory of the region is crossed by the Trans-Siberian Railway with a branch line running northwards from the station Izvest-

kovaya. The Baikal-Amur Mainline[1] runs near the southern border of the Jewish Autonomous Region.

The river Amur flowing in the South of the region is a convenient and capacious waterway. Remote districts are linked by motor roads and air routes.

The Jewish Autonomous Region has a highly mechanised and efficient agriculture. The area of cultivated land exceeds 150,000 hectares, or is three times bigger than 50 years ago. Land-amelioration and production specialisation programmes are being carried out, the sown areas are being further expanded and advanced technologies are introduced.

The Waldheim settlement, situated 11 kilometres east of Birobijan, is the administrative and cultural centre of the Zavety Ilyicha ("Legacy of Lenin") collective farm founded in 1932 on the initiative of the first two families that came to this area—the Jewish family of Leib Gefen and the Russian family of Kirill Maslennikov, and they called the settlement Waldheim ("Home in a Forest"). The story of this collective farm is typical of the development of the whole region. At the beginning the farm had a few hectares of land wrested from virgin forest, 27 cows and 34 horses. Today it is a big modern agricultural enterprise with 23,000 hectares of land, of which 3,700 are sown to various crops. The collective farmers have at their disposal 120 lorries, 20 combine harvesters of various types, 70 different mechanised units and other farm equipment, and 3,600 head of cattle. The annual produce of the collective farm is worth four million roubles; its annual profit amounts to one

[1] The Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM) is a railway running across Eastern Siberia and the Soviet Far East, its total length being 4,300 kilometres.

million roubles. The collective farm draws on its own funds to expand production and to finance social and cultural development. It has built five mechanised livestock units and also a House of Culture. The collective farm has three secondary schools. A hospital, a kindergarten and a shop have been built by the state.

But the greatest wealth of the Zavety Ilyicha collective farm is the people who work there. Men and women of 11 nationalities work on the farm side by side, in friendship and concord. For many years the farm was managed by Vladimir Peller (1913-78), almost a legendary figure in the region. Peller came here in the early 30s upon completing his military service. He began to work as a tractor driver on the collective farm and three years later was elected its chairman. When the war with Nazi Germany began Peller volunteered for the front. He was awarded the Order of Glory of all three classes [1] for his heroism on the battlefield. After the war Vladimir Peller displayed exceptional skill and energy as the manager of an efficient collective farm. He was highly respected and was named a Hero of Socialist Labour. [2] Peller represented the Jewish Autonomous Region in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and was a member of the Central Auditing Commission of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, of the Khaba-

[1] The Order of Glory, established in 1943, is awarded to privates and non-commissioned officers of the Soviet Army who showed valour and courage on the battlefield and has three classes.

[2] The highest award conferred for exceptional services in the fields of the economy, culture and political work by the state. Instituted in 1938, it is awarded by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet and includes the Order of Lenin and the "Hammer and Sickle" gold medal.

rovsk Territorial Party Committee and the Party Committee of the Jewish Autonomous Region.

The Zavety Ilyicha collective farm specialises in milk production and vegetable growing. Each year it sells to the state more than 3,000 tons of milk and more than 6,000 tons of vegetables (tomatoes, cucumbers, cabbage, beets, and potatoes). Forty-five per cent of the 900 collective farmers are women, the total population of the Waldheim settlement being 3,000. Each family has a home of its own and a small personal plot of land. The collective farm's hospital with 80 beds employs 12 doctors and 38 doctor's assistants and nurses.

The cultural life of the Jewish Autonomous Region is rich and varied. The well-known poet and playwright Emmanuil Kazakevich began his writing career here. He came to the Soviet Far East with his father Genrikh Kazakevich, a man of wide learning and cultivated tastes, who was the editor-in-chief of the regional newspaper *Birobigianer Stern.* Emmanuil worked in a collective farm, was director of the House of Culture and founded the Jewish drama theatre in Birobijan. A book of verse by Emmanuil Kazakevich was the first literary work in Yiddish published in the region. His play *Milk and Honey,* which is about the region's first settlers, was also staged for the first time at the regional drama theatre. After he left Birobijan Emmanuil Kazakevich has continued to help and give advice to many young writers from the region. When the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45 began he volunteered for the front, commanded a reconnaissance unit and took part in the storming of Berlin. Among his works are novels and stories: *The Star,* a story about military scouts, *Two People in the Steppe, Spring on the Oder, The*

Heart of a Friend, The House in the Square, and the *Blue Note-Book,* a story about Lenin. Emmanuil Kazakevich was twice awarded the USSR State Prize, in 1948 and 1950.

The system of public education and of popularising cultural achievements provides a firm basis for cultural development in the Jewish Autonomous Region. It includes scores of general schools which employ 3,000 teachers (one teacher per 66 residents), music schools, specialised secondary schools, including an art school, and 112 libraries with two million books. Many Soviet Jewish writers grew up and began to write in the region, such as the novelists B. Miller, M. Goldshtein, G. Rabnikov and S. Borzhes and the poets L. Wasserman, I. Bronfman, G. Koikhman and M. Riante, whose works are regularly printed by the Khabarovsk Publishing House and who are widely read both in the Soviet Union and abroad. All new works by these authors are reviewed in the monthly *Sovietish Heimland.*

Theatres play a prominent role in the cultural life of the region. Birobijan takes pride in its theatrical traditions which have been enriched largely thanks to the Jewish Chamber Music Theatre, which is very popular in the Soviet Union and abroad. The theatre's company draws on traditional Jewish music and folklore to give a modern interpretation of the rich cultural heritage of the Jews. Singers, ballet soloists and drama actors from all over the Soviet Union take part in the theatre's productions. The Jewish Chamber Music Theatre attracted particular attention of theatregoers and critics when it staged the opera *A Black Bridle for a White Mare.* The opera is based on Jewish folk melodies and, against the background

of the life in a Jewish settlement at the beginning of this century, depicts the conflict between man's lofty ideals and his cupidity and greed. The opera has been performed with great success scores of times in Moscow, Vilnius, Riga, Kaunas, Minsk and Chelyabinsk.

The theatre recently staged a new play called *All Together*. It is hard to say which genre it belongs to; the play "simply" deals with the life of ordinary people and the links between the old and the new. The Birobijan theatre also produced the play *Fiddler on the Roof* by the American playwright Jerry Bock, based on Shalom Aleichem's stories from *Tevye the Milkman*. The theatre company constantly seeks new forms of dramatic expression, combining, in particular, performance by actors with puppet show.

The region also boasts four folk theatres, 122 recreation and social centres (clubs), 151 cinemas and two museums. The famous violin ensemble of the Birobijan Palace of Culture has performed with much success in Moscow and other Soviet cities.

Birobijan has had two regional newspapers since 1930—the *Birobijan Star* published in Russian and the *Birobigianer Stern* published in Yiddish. Although they have the same name they are two different newspapers intended for different audiences. While all readers who know Yiddish can read the *Birobijan Star* in Russian, not all can read the *Birobigianer Stern* in Yiddish, which is also distributed in several foreign countries. Both newspapers were awarded the orders Badge of Honour by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet in 1980. Birobijan radio broadcasts both in Russian and Yiddish, and also relays broadcasts from Khabarovsk.

The Jewish Autonomous Region has won high government awards for its achievements in the economic and cultural fields. In 1967 the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet conferred on the Jewish Autonomous Region the Order of Lenin [1] on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. In 1972 the region was awarded the Order of Friendship Among Nations [2] for its outstanding services in promoting friendship among nations, for its economic and cultural achievements and also in connection with the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Soviet Union.

The political structure of the Jewish Autonomous Region is being constantly improved on the basis of past experience and in accordance with present-day requirements. In December 1981 the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation endorsed the new legal status of the Federation's five national autonomous regions, including the Jewish Autonomous Region. The new legal status of an autonomous region was drafted with the participation of representatives of the nationalities concerned and approved by the local Soviets of People's Deputies before it was submitted for consideration by the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation.

In line with the policy of the Soviet Communist Party for strengthening the role of Soviets in po-

[1] The Order of Lenin, instituted in 1930, is the highest award of the Soviet Union.

[2] The Order of Friendship Among Nations was established in 1972 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Soviet Union as an award for exceptional services in strengthening the friendship and fraternal cooperation of socialist nations and nationalities and for a major contribution to the economic, socio-political and cultural development of the Soviet Union and of the Union Republics.

litical, economic, social and cultural construction, the new law extended the rights and authority of the Soviets of People's Deputies of the Jewish Autonomous Republic in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres.

During the 50 years of its existence the Jewish Autonomous Region has firmly established itself, gained strength and fulfilled the aspirations of people who believed in the possibility of creating a Jewish national and state entity in the Soviet Union.

A comparison of the Jewish Autonomous Region with Israel reveals striking differences between them. The Jewish Autonomous Region was formed on an unsettled territory, while Israel, apart from the territory apportioned to it by the United Nations, forcibly appropriated territories populated by another nation. The Jewish Autonomous Region was established and has been developing in peace and tranquillity, while Israel has from its very inception waged ceaseless wars with neighbouring Arab states. The Jewish Autonomous Region is part of a peaceful and friendly community of more than one hundred nations and nationalities of the Soviet Union, while Israel serves as an imperialism's tool of war and aggression in the Middle East.

Participation of Jews in the Partisan Movement During the Great Patriotic War

In 1944 guerilla warfare against the fascist forces reached its peak all over Europe. Historians in the West have traditionally given much attention to the Resistance Movement in some European

countries. We would like here to examine only one of historical facts concerning the partisan movement in the Soviet Union which are to this day known only to a few specialists and which in our view are of no small importance.

We want to tell our readers about the courageous role of Soviet citizens of Jewish nationality in the partisan movement.

Let us try to picture to ourselves the conditions in which Jews lived in the Soviet Union during the war. It should be noted first of all that even at the beginning of this century many of Russia's Jews were progressives and held revolutionary views. Owing to a general weakening of religious influence in Soviet times the necessity of forming a separate ethnic group of citizens of Jewish nationality receded, though this does not at all mean that they had been completely assimilated. In fact, the Soviet government provided to the Jewish population every opportunity to preserve their cultural traditions and national traits.

The duty of Soviet citizens of Jewish nationality, as of the rest of the Soviet people, consisted above all in building a strong socialist state. Fulfilling their internationalist duty many of them took part in the civil war in Spain (1936-39) on the side of the republicans in their struggle against the fascist putsch led by Franco. Representatives of the Jewish bourgeoisie in the West quite often collaborated with the fascists, especially in countries occupied by the Nazis.

Careful investigations have shown that collaboration of certain Zionist circles in Europe with the fascists mainly took the following forms:

— alliance of Jewish fascists with fascist regimes;

— agreements between the Zionist and Nazi leaders on sending the property of German Jews to Palestine (which finally led to a visit by a Nazi delegation headed by Adolf Eichmann to the Middle East in 1937 with the knowledge and consent of Feivel Polkes, head of the Hagana organisation);

— ultra-nationalist and Right-extremist activity of some of the Zionists; for instance, while a grouping (subsequently headed by Menachem Begin) was negotiating a deal with Mussolini, the head of "Lehi" Abraham Stern received military aid from the reactionary Polish government, and his successor Itzhak Shamir tried to come to terms with the Nazi diplomatic representatives in Syria and Turkey;

— collaborationist activity of leaders of the Jewish ghettos which had been created by the Nazis in preparation for the mass extermination of Jews (particularly zealous among them were K. Merin in Upper Silesia, I. Kasztner in Budapest and E. Barasz in Bialystok).[1]

Now to return to the events of 1941, in particular, the attack of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union. It should be noted that the partisan movement had a long tradition going back to the times of the struggle against the Mongol-Tatars led by Dmitry Donskoy, which ended in the Battle on the Kulikovo Field in 1380, to the uprising against the Polish invaders in the early 17th century, the war against King Charles XII of Sweden in the early 18th century and guerilla warfare against Napoleon's forces in 1812, to say nothing of the partisan struggle during the civil war and the armed foreign intervention in 1918-22.

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[1] Bialystok is a city in northeastern Poland.

In trying to analyse the socio-political situation on the eve of the Nazi attack on the western regions of the Ukraine and Byelorussia and on the Baltic Republics, which had joined the Soviet Union just before the war, in 1940, and had a considerable Jewish population, it is necessary to bear in mind the following circumstances.

The Soviet authorities had no time completely to eliminate the influence of the Right and nationalist elements in those regions within one year. Reactionary and chauvinist sentiments were further encouraged under German occupation in 1941 and the years that followed. Nationalistic enmity was particularly fomented by the Nazis in the Ukraine and Byelorussia. The Latin alphabet was introduced in the occupied territories; the invaders falsified historical facts and promised independence to the captured regions.

Rabid anti-Semitic propaganda was a special kind of ideological weapon aimed at sowing national hatred. Deliberate, systematic actions were taken for the physical extermination of Soviet government officials, members of the Communist Party and the Young Communist League, and progressive intellectuals. All this was done in order to forestall any attempt to organise resistance in any form. But the massacres of civilians, widespread looting and brutal oppression only served to expose the true nature of the Nazis.

The Soviet government, faced with grave difficulties as a result of the treacherous attack launched by Nazi Germany on June 22, 1941, issued two directives on actions to be taken on territories that might be occupied by the enemy. These directives were largely instrumental in saving the lives of many citizens of Jewish nationality.

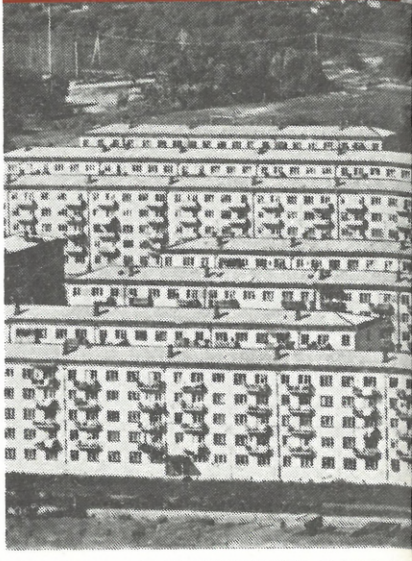
In accordance with the first directive, the evacuation of industrial facilities went hand in hand with the evacuation of all civilian population (citizens of Jewish nationality were among the first to be evacuated) from regions threatened with occupation to safe areas in the Urals, Kazakhstan, Central Asia and Siberia. The second directive provided for concrete measures to organise a powerful partisan movement in the enemy's rear (the setting up of underground groups and detachments, training of partisan fighters and commanders, supply of partisans with munitions and provisions, etc.). Along with their military tasks, the partisan forces were also to punish collaborators, give assistance to the civilian population, including Jews, and inform the population about the real state of affairs on the battlefront.

From 1942 the partisan movement in the Soviet Union became an efficient and ramified force of major strategic importance, which included hundreds of thousands of men and women. Partisan fighters carried out numerous subversive acts and daring attacks. Their operations were guided by radio from the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement [1] in Moscow. Specially trained military specialists were air-dropped in the enemy rear to command partisan detachments. All this helped to turn the partisan movement into a powerful force in the struggle against the Nazi invaders. At least 20,000 Jewish fighters took an active part in this struggle. By that time nearly 60 generals of Jewish nationality held top commanding

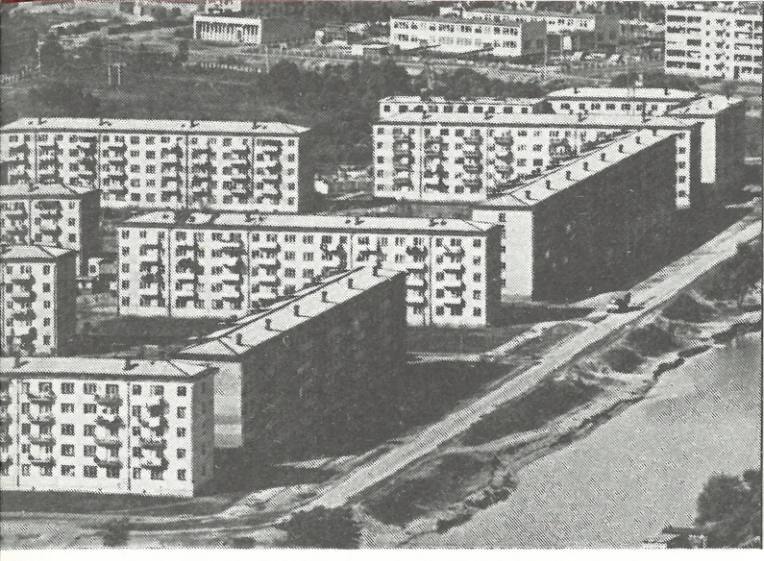
[1] The Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement was set up under the Supreme Command Headquarters on May 30, 1942.

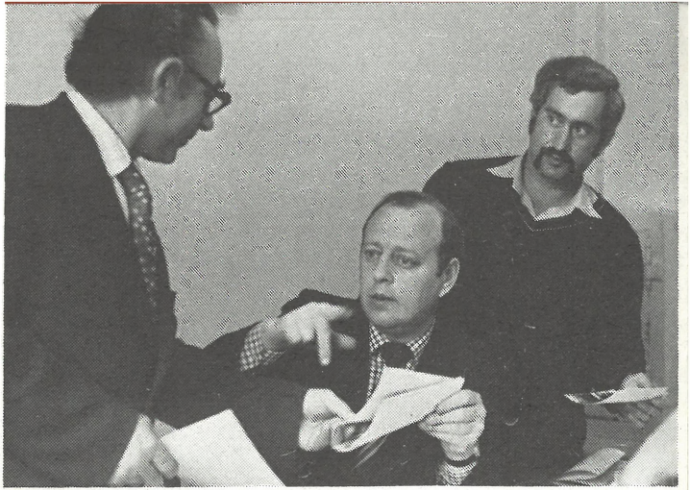
A young family out for a stroll in Birobijan. Sergei is an assistant foreman at a knit-goods factory; Alla teaches music at a kindergarten.

Birobijan, founded in 1928 around the small railway station Tikhonkaya deep in the taiga forest, is now a major industrial and cultural centre.



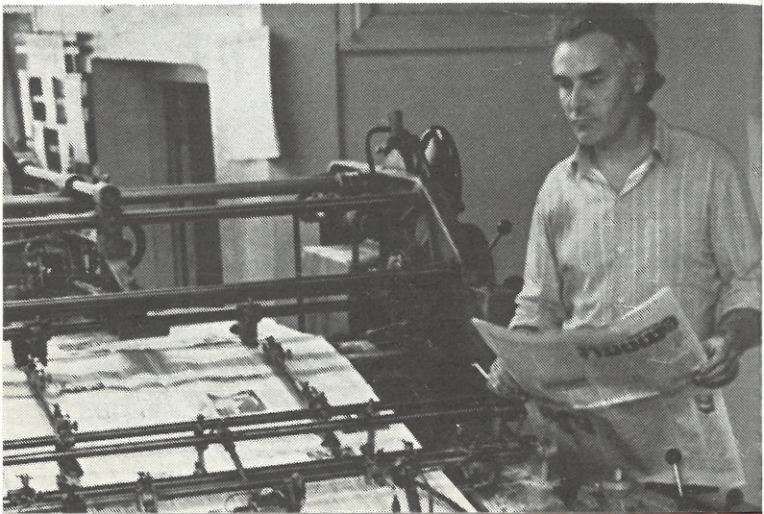
People of many nationalities live and work at the Zavety Ilyicha collective farm. The large Vishchinikin family (father Semyon is Russian, mother Riva Jewish) always gathers together on festive occasions.





Leonid Shkolnik (centre), Editor-in-Chief of the *Birobigianer Stern*, is discussing the newspaper's next issue with his colleagues.

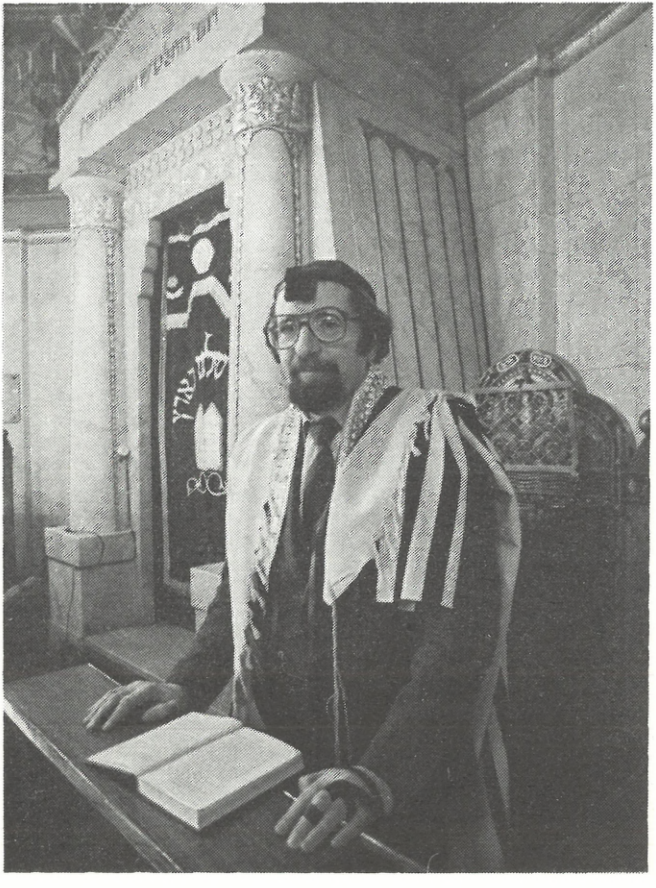
The Jewish Autonomous Region has two newspapers of its own—the *Birobigianer Stern* in Yiddish and the *Birobijan Star* in Russian.

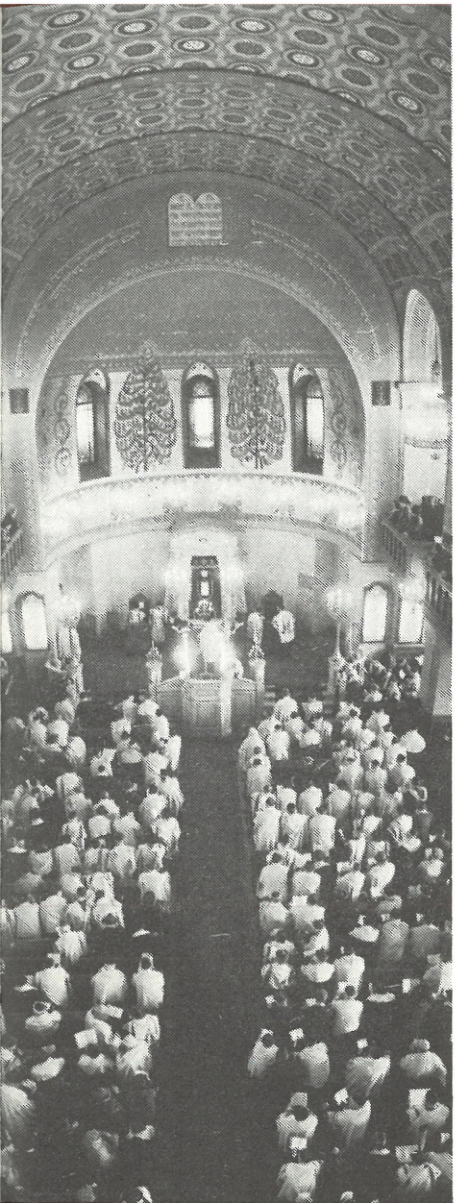


Lev Shapiro, first secretary of the Party Committee of the Jewish Autonomous Region, is also a candidate for CPSU Central Committee member, and a deputy of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

Yelena Arnapolina, sewing-machine operator at the Birobijan knit-goods factory, is a member of the All-Union Council of Trade Unions and of the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion. In 1983 she was awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labour. Yelena gladly shares her experience with her fellow workers.

Rabbi of the Moscow choral synagogue Adolf Shaevich.

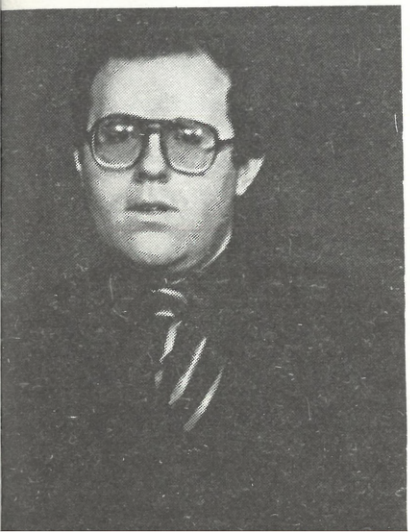




A service at the Moscow choral synagogue.

The Birobijan medical school, one of the oldest in the Soviet Far East, trains nurses, assistant doctors, and obstetricians.

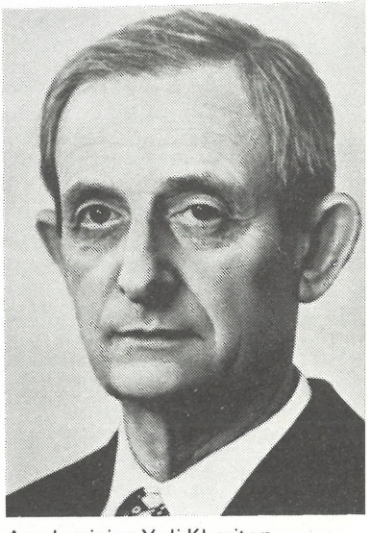
A scene from the play *Tevye from Anateyevka* staged at the Jewish Chamber Music Theatre.



Composer Mikhail Gluz, director of the Jewish Chamber Music Theatre, is a Merited Artiste of the Russian Federation.

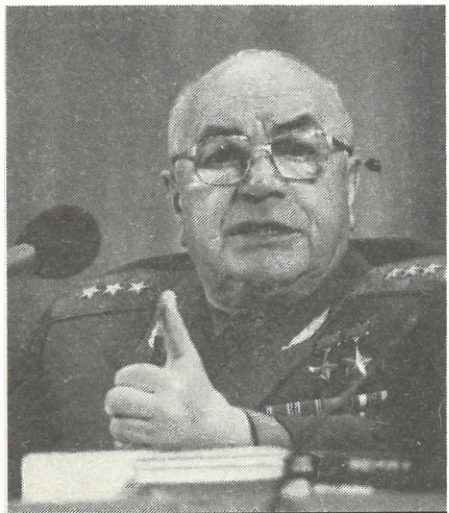
Writer Alexander Chakovsky speaking at an anti-war meeting of workers in creative arts held in the Hall of Columns of the Trade-Union House in Moscow.

Veniamin Dymshits, deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.



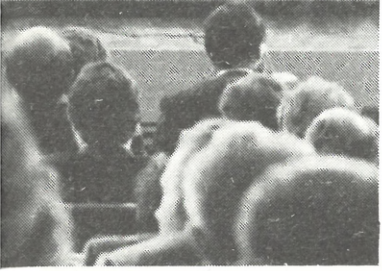
Academician Yuli Khariton, thrice Hero of Socialist Labour.

Lev Volodarsky, the head of the USSR Central Board of Statistics.

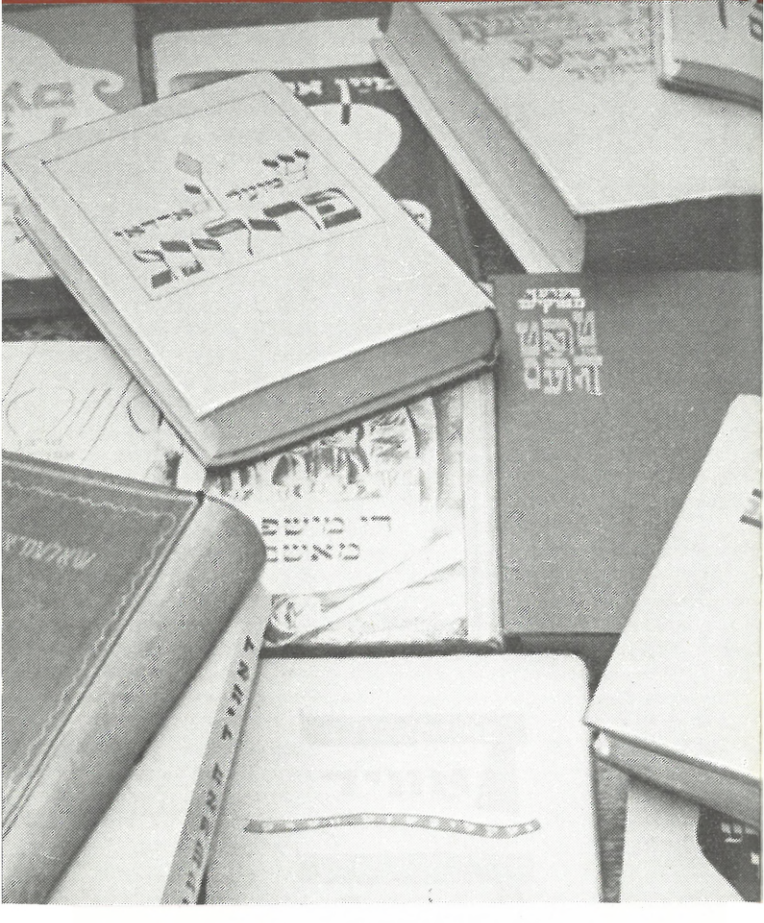


Colonel-General David Dragunsky, chairman of the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion.

At a press conference of the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion.



Aaron Vergelis, Editor-in-Chief of the *Sovietish Heimland*, exposing the false allegations of Zionists that the development of Jewish national culture is hindered in the Soviet Union.



The Soviet Union publishes more literature in Yiddish than does any other country in the world.

posts in the Red Army. A total of 130 Jews were awarded the honourable title of Hero of the Soviet Union [1] during the Great Patriotic War and scores of thousands were decorated with orders and medals. A special medal, "To the Partisan in the Great Patriotic War", was instituted in 1943.

The position of Soviet Jews on territories occupied by the Germans was extremely tragic because of the monstrous Nazi plans for the extermination and enslavement of the peoples of the Soviet Union. Many of those who had not been evacuated to the East were killed by the Nazis. Apart from that, in 1939 large numbers of Polish Jews illegally crossed over to Soviet territory. The Nazis killed them by scores of thousands together with other "undesirable elements" (intellectuals, Gipsies, etc). These atrocities were perpetrated by special SS units. People were herded into ghettos near big cities and then sent to places of mass extermination.

All Soviet people rose to the fight against the invaders.

It is impossible today to reconstruct all the details of the heroic struggle in which tens of thousands of people took part. We can only mention some of its aspects. It should be noted first of all that guerilla warfare was waged on a broad front stretching from the north of Latvia across

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[1] An honorable title and the highest class of distinction connected with the performance of a heroic exploit, instituted in 1934. It is conferred by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet. A person awarded this title is decorated with the Order of Lenin and the "Gold Star" medal. A bronze bust of one who has been twice awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union is erected at his or her birthplace.

Lithuania and all of Byelorussia with its vast forests, around Minsk and across the Ukraine—areas which had a Jewish population of several hundred thousand.

Links were maintained between resistance groups organised in Jewish ghettos and partisan detachments; this enabled many Jews, young and middle aged, to join the ranks of partisans and fight for the freedom of their Soviet homeland, for their human dignity.

In 1939 the Nazis disbanded all Jewish organisations in Germany and on occupied territories and prohibited Jews to leave Germany or any other country occupied by Germany. During the Second World War the Nazis began to carry on the policy of genocide, i.e., extermination of whole nations, including all Jews. They herded Jews into ghettos which in 1941-42 were turned into death camps.

The Nazis declared that the ghettos would be "self-governed", but in fact they were headed by Nazi stooges from among rich pro-Zionist Jews who toadied to Nazi hangmen.

The Germans appointed J. Gens elder of the Jewish ghetto in Vilnius, and Dr. E. Elkes elder of the Jewish ghetto in Kaunas, where he was a well-known figure. Both men and their associates were inveterate Zionists. Today Zionists try to create the impression that the Jewish ghetto elders in Lithuania were much respected people. They say that Dr. Elkes consented to be the elder only because the whole community begged him to do so and because he realised that it would be much worse if the elder's post was taken by some unscrupulous Nazi toady. The fact that the ghetto was headed by a man of good reputation supposedly gave the Jews hopes for survival. That was

a patently conciliatory approach. The Zionists maintain that there was no other way. But there was another way, that of struggle against the Nazis, about which the Zionists prefer to say nothing.

What could the ghetto elders do?

Below is an excerpt from a statement made by J. Gens:

"I have to think of Jewish blood, not Jewish honour. If they ask for a thousand Jews, I give them. If we Jews don't do this the Germans will come and there will be chaos in the ghetto. In sacrificing hundreds I save thousands. In sacrificing thousands I save tens of thousands."

According to Gens, there was no other way but to submit to the butchers. The more submissive the Jews, the more they supposedly had to gain. In Zionist terms "Jewish honour" was opposed to "Jewish blood", and so one had to choose between one's honour and one's life. This laid bare the anti-human, anti-Jewish, treacherous and hypocritical nature of the Zionist policy, its criminal cowardice, and the intention of the Zionists to save their own skin by sacrificing the lives of many thousands of their brethren.

No sensible and fair-minded person would reproach the ghetto residents for not committing mass suicide. But this does not mean that we should not analyse critically the policy of the Zionist leaders, which proved fatal for so many Jews. The Zionist leaders would not admit that there was a third way, that of a resolute, relentless and at the same time flexible struggle against the Nazis, which, like any struggle, involved sacrifices.

Were the Jews living in ghettos too frightened to fight? Would they save their lives at the price of dishonour?

Not at all. The ghetto inmates sought to end their enforced inaction, as can be seen, for instance, from a book about the Kaunas ghetto, *Illusions and Reality*, by Genrikas Zimanas:

"December 31, 1941. 8 p.m. It is freezing cold. The narrow criss-crossing lanes of the ghetto, situated in the medieval quarter of the Old Town, are completely dark, except for the white patches of high snowdrifts...

"From time to time shadows move in the darkness. People are coming from different directions to a shack at the end of a big snow-covered yard. At the gate, close to the fence, some men are on watch.

"The meeting begins. It unanimously adopts a resolution on uniting all resistance groups in the ghetto into one organisation. The meeting discusses the programme and adopts resolutions... It decides to establish contact with the underground Communist Party organisation of Kaunas and under its leadership join the armed struggle against the German invaders.

" 'We are partisans!' The participants in the meeting carry this slogan to all the cells of the resistance movement."

The inmates of the Kaunas ghetto, who were hunted down like animals by the Nazis, formed a military partisan organisation which was headed, among others, by Chaim Jelin and Dmitry Galperin. Its members were trained for armed combat and learned to handle arms. With time they established contact with the underground committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party in the south of Lithuania, and helped hundreds of young people escape from the ghetto and join partisan groups to fight shoulder to shoulder with Lithuanians, Rus-

sians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Tatars and people of other nationalities of the Soviet Union.

Those who remained in the ghetto helped the partisans obtain weapons, supplied them with medicines and provided intelligence data. In one of their more important actions Kaunas ghetto partisans helped to organise the escape of prisoners from Fort 9.

Members of the underground resistance group of the Kaunas ghetto established contact with the prisoners of Fort 9 and helped them escape. After consulting the underground Communist Party committee of southern Lithuania they advised the fugitives to go to the ghetto where secret hiding places had been specially prepared for them and where they would receive clothing and weapons so that they could later join the partisans. One of the organisers of the escape was Israel Veselnitsky who later commanded the "Kova" partisan group.

The underground resistance group in Vilnius was headed by Itzhak Vitenberg, Boris Shershenevsky, China Borovskaya-Kaplinskaya and other patriots. Samuel Kaplinsky led several hundred young Jews out of the ghetto through sewage conduits. Many of the fugitives joined partisan detachments. Not all of such actions were successful; not all the fugitives managed to escape and join the armed struggle. Many of them were killed in the attempt, but nothing could shake the patriots' determination to take part in the nationwide resistance movement.

In recalling these past events today we realise with bitter regret that the lives of many more ghetto inmates could have been saved and they could have been helped to get in touch with par-

tisan units, that the number of people murdered by the Nazis in the ghettos could have been much fewer and the enemy would have paid a hundred times more dearly for their crimes.

Why couldn't all who wanted to join the partisans do so? The blame lies mainly with the Zionist leaders and their "restraint" tactics which made the Jews an easy prey for the Nazis.

The Zionists intimidated and blackmailed young ghetto inmates who wished to escape. They would say: "To be sure you will live, young and strong as you are. But what will happen to your old parents, your younger brothers and sisters, your own children who cannot fight? The fascists will kill them all in revenge for your escape." People are easily influenced when they are told that their actions could endanger the lives of their relations and friends. Even someone who is brave and resolute and unafraid to risk his own life feels he has no right to endanger the lives of others. So the Zionists' tactics worked; in moral terms, however, it amounted to the most revolting blackmail. The fact is that *all* ghetto inmates were doomed to death. In joining the partisans one did not expose those left behind in the ghetto to still greater dangers but would have an opportunity to help them escape or to avenge them.

If the partisan groups formed by ghetto fugitives were bigger they could have, with proper organisation, rescued children and women from the ghetto on a more regular basis. The Communists repeatedly explained this to the ghetto residents. Many Jews chose the path of struggle as befits true patriots. Yes, some of them gave their lives in fighting the Nazis. But only 3 to 4 per cent of the Jews who stayed behind in the ghettos sur-

vived; the rest were killed, tortured to death or perished in gas chambers.

The underground Party organisations in Vilnius and Kaunas did everything possible to rescue as many Jews as they could from ghettos and mobilise them for the struggle against the Nazi invaders. Communists helped ghetto inmates to contact partisan detachments, as did resistance groups inside ghettos formed by Party and Komsomol organisations. But the Zionist leaders, the so-called elders, resorted to every possible trick to prevent people from leaving the ghettos. And in many cases they succeeded. Yet the Communists continued their work, and more and more people fled the ghettos and joined partisan groups in Lithuania and Byelorussia. The partisan and underground organisations became so active that they managed to take people out of ghettos in lorries. Slander-mongers in Israel claim that Lithuanian partisans refused to accept ghetto fugitives into their ranks and took away their weapons, but this is an outright lie. The partisans urged members of underground organisations to help all those who were ready to fight to escape from ghettos, obtain weapons if possible and join partisan groups. These groups were small at first and short of weapons but they always welcomed fugitives from ghettos.

Policies are invariably tested by practice, and today we are in a position to judge the effectiveness of two policy lines in the attitude towards the invaders: that of armed resistance, adopted by the Communists, and that of "restraint" preached by the Zionist chieftains.

Of the several hundred young people who escaped from the Kaunas and Vilnius ghettos 10 per

cent were killed in action. But they died fighting for their honour and dignity. This must not be forgotten.

After attempts to prove that the partisans refused to accept Jews into their ranks failed, the Zionists began to change tactics. For instance, the newspaper *Isroelstimme* has published an article by Chaim Schochot who claims that the number of Jews among Lithuanian partisans was quite considerable. So, in one moment the Zionists are saying that the partisans refused to admit Jews into their ranks and in another, that there were many Jewish fighters in partisan detachments.

In actual fact Jews accounted for 7.5 per cent of the total number of Lithuanian partisans, which roughly corresponded to the percentage of Jews in the republic's population. The number of Jewish partisan fighters could have been much greater if the Zionists' influence in ghettos had not been so strong.

To give one's life for a just cause is to die the death of a hero. Blood spilt in the struggle for a noble cause creates more heroes. That is why the memory of anti-fascist fighters, both Jews and non-Jews, is cherished so dearly; their names are inscribed on memorial plaques and streets are named after them.

Of course it would not be quite just to put the entire blame for the death of tens of thousands of Jews in the two Lithuanian ghettos of Vilnius and Kaunas on their elders. In many cases they certainly could not have changed the course of events. But we cannot ignore the fact that Zionist ideology, which was used to persuade Jews that they were not citizens of the country in which they

lived, that their homeland was far away and hence their objective was not to fight but to stay alive till the hard times were over while their "hosts" were doing the fighting, had played its criminal part and caused the death of tens of thousands of Jews.

Centres of resistance were also formed in many Byelorussian towns whose aim was to help Jews break out of the ghettos and join the partisans. In the towns of Lida, Zhitel, Novogrudok and Ivoye the resistance began with the manufacture of bottles filled with acid which the residents hurled at the Germans preparing for another bloody massacre. Very important work was done by the underground Jewish resistance organisation in Minsk, which began to wage a struggle already in August 1941 under the slogans "Leave the ghetto!" and "Out of the ghetto and to partisan detachments!" In spite of fierce reprisals by the Nazis the organisation came into contact in September of the same year with the detachment led by Captain Bystrov under whose guidance the first Jewish partisan group in the area had been formed in July. Direct contacts were also established between the ghetto and underground Party committees, which enabled the partisans to receive from the ghetto clothing, footwear and medicines. With the active assistance of Communists from the underground the partisans organised the escape of hundreds of people from the ghetto.

In April 1942 two groups of fighters fled from the ghetto; later on they operated from a base in the forests near Slutsk. By that time Jews from the Minsk ghetto made up a considerable part of at least seven partisan formations.

In the Ukraine, the organisation of one of the

biggest partisan detachments began on September 23, 1942, with the escape of ten Jews from the ghetto in the town of Korets just when the Hitlerites were about to start another bloody reprisal. The patriots crossed the river Sluch and went underground in Zhitomir where they founded a partisan group. Later they came into contact with the Communist underground centre. By mid-1943 the group had grown into a big partisan detachment one-third of whose fighters were Jews. The partisans freed villages from Germans, blew up bridges and railway tracks and killed invaders.

Another partisan detachment consisted originally of about fifteen Jews from small Ukrainian towns. The detachment operated in the floodlands of the river Styr under the command of two Red Army soldiers who had escaped from German captivity. Its fighters went into action in October 1942 and later took part in guerilla warfare together with other detachments.

Still another partisan detachment was formed in the village of Mazopyuvka by a group of young Jews acting on their own initiative. The detachment which eventually numbered 70 fighters contacted the famous partisan commander Sidor Kovpak, joined his division and took part in the liberation of the prisoners of a labour camp in Skalat in eastern Galicia. Many Jews freed from the camp also joined the partisans.

We have cited only a few facts from the eventful history of the partisan warfare in which Soviet Jews took an active part. Soviet citizens of Jewish nationality made an important contribution to the common cause of the anti-fascist partisan movement. We have not considered here, for

instance, the struggle waged by Jewish partisans in the northern regions of the Russian Federation, in the area of Leningrad, in the Bryansk and Smolensk regions and in southern Ukraine (in Odessa and the Crimea), all the way to the Caucasus. It should be noted that the partisan movement itself played a decisive role in saving Jewish lives. Besides the rescue of Jews from prisons and concentration camps and helping the inmates of ghettos, the partisans carried out operations for the rescue of Jewish citizens in conformity with the directives of the Soviet Supreme Command. Many Jewish families were hidden in special camps located in the depth of forests and swamps and were able to withstand all the hardships thanks to the constant protection and care of scores of big and small partisan detachments. Soviet partisan detachments, particularly those operating near the frontline, helped hundreds of thousands of Jews to escape and cross the frontline to safety.

The chronicle of the partisan movement of the Soviet people against the invaders, in which citizens of Jewish nationality fought side by side with other Soviet patriots, provides numerous examples of mass heroism. We would like to mention here one of the units of the legendary Ukrainian partisan division commanded by Major-General Sidor Kovpak. The unit operated in the enemy rear from the very first days of the war under the command of Yuri Kolesnikov, a Lieutenant of the Soviet Army. During a raid in the German rear the unit reached the river Nieman near the town of Mosty on July 12, 1944. The Nazis who had closely guarded one of the bridges which was of strategic importance decided to blow it up to prevent the advance of the Soviet Army. Kolesnikov's unit re-

ceived orders to capture the bridge and hold it until the arrival of Soviet regular troops. An Italian officer, Giovanni Di Pietro, who was taken prisoner by the partisans agreed to help them. He informed the partisan command about the strength and organisation of the bridge defence and the system of mining. Kolesnikov's unit captured the bridge and thus considerably helped the successful advance of the Soviet troops.

Today Yuri Kolesnikov is a well-known Soviet writer and deputy chairman of the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion.

The Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion

In the new wave of the cold war started by US President Ronald Reagan ideological offensive plays a key role. And in this offensive international Zionism, which has always been and continues to be in the forefront of the anti-socialist and anti-Soviet campaign, holds a central place. The Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion was formed in the spring of 1983 to give a resolute rebuff to anti-Soviet propaganda on the part of the Zionists.

The Committee was established on the initiative and with the active participation of a number of Soviet public figures who proposed to set up a voluntary organisation capable of waging a consistent and resolute struggle against the ideology and practice of Zionism and, in a broader international context, of helping to strengthen world peace and

promoting mankind's advance along the path of social progress.

As is stated in the Appeal of the initiators of the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion, published in April 1983, the urgency of waging an ideological struggle against Zionism has become particularly great these days because "in pursuance of its global strategy, imperialism is making extensive use of international Zionism as a strike force in its offensive against socialism and the national liberation movement, against the forces of peace and social progress."

The committee's founders stated that "Zionism essentially consists in extreme nationalism, chauvinism, racial intolerance, the justification of territorial seizures and annexations, armed adventurism, the cult of political permissiveness and impunity, demagogy and ideological subversion, underhand manoeuvring and perfidy."

The Appeal also gave this assessment of Israel's policies: "Political adventurism, the occupation of Arab territories, the armed aggression against sovereign Lebanon, the tens of thousands of peaceful people killed or wounded, the massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, the violence and torture in the Ansar and other concentration camps—for all these crimes the responsibility rests with the ruling elite of Israel, with the leaders of international Zionism."

The Appeal evoked a wide response among Soviet people. Thousands of letters were received within a few days in support of the idea of establishing the Anti-Zionist Committee. Yulian Shulmeister, who teaches at Lvov State University, wrote, for instance:

"I support with all my heart the Appeal by a

group of public figures of our country proposing the formation of an Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion... It is the tragic irony of fate that the Jewish state should deprive the Arab people of Palestine of their homeland, torture defenceless people, build concentration camps and act in a spirit of undisguised racism.

"I consider such actions to be an insult to the sacred memory of Jews murdered by the fascists during the Second World War, an insult to the memory of millions of Soviet soldiers who saved the Jewish population of Europe from Nazi genocide.

"I am a Jew and I hate Zionism which has imbibed medieval fanaticism and is sowing sorrow and death; I know all this very well. I served in the ranks of the Soviet Army from the first to the last day of the war; my family was exterminated by the Nazis. After the war I took part in the work of the Extraordinary Commission for Investigating Nazi Brutalities on the territory of the Lvov Region where hundreds of thousands of Jews were murdered. My conscience demands that Zionism should be brought to trial before history. It is necessary to condemn it always, to expose its reactionary and inhuman nature before the whole world."

With broad and strong support from the public, the idea set forth in the Appeal was quickly implemented and the establishment of the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion was formalised on April 21, 1983. Colonel-General David Dragunsky, twice Hero of the Soviet Union, a member of the CPSU Central Auditing Commission, was elected chairman of the committee, and Dr. Samuil Zivs, a prominent lawyer, first deputy chairman. Mark Krupkin, a lawyer, and Igor Belyaev,

an economist and expert in international relations, and Yuri Kolesnikov, a writer, were elected deputy chairmen of the committee.

From the first day of its existence the Anti-Zionist Committee has set to conducting extensive political and scientific activities; it has been exposing Israel's policy of dragging out a solution of the Palestinian problem and the falsehoods of Zionist propaganda, and publishing various historical and informative materials.

The Portrait of a Hero

The son of a poor Jewish tailor, he attained a high commanding post in the Soviet Armed Forces. He has been twice awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union and is one of the generals who noticeably contributed to the success of the final Battle for Berlin. He is proud of his nationality. He is Colonel-General David Dragunsky, chairman of the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion.

"In the autumn of 1956," General Dragunsky recalls, "I visited France as a representative of the Soviet Veterans' Committee and attended the ceremony of the unveiling of a monument to six million Jews murdered by Nazis. Delegates from 24 countries gathered in a small square in Paris where the monument had been erected. Among those present were British MPs, Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, the President of the French Republic, Senators, ministers and generals. Thousands of ordinary Parisians came to pay tribute to the victims of fascism who perished in gas chambers and the furnaces of death camps. The unveiling ceremony began.

A French minister who had taken part in the war made a speech which was a sincere plea for peace. Baron Rothschild said on behalf of French Jews: 'May this monument, which has been erected not in order to tell the story of the dead but for the sake of the living, not allow the coming generations to forget the horrors of the war...'.

"The leader of international Zionism, Nahum Goldmann, in an emotional speech condemned Nazism and war: 'We must not allow such crimes to be repeated. We should understand that peace and justice are indivisible...'.

"Dr. Jacob Kaplan, Chief Rabbi of Paris, began the service as a choir of children whose parents had perished during the war sang. The cloth covering the monument slowly slid down to the strains of the funeral march. All those present bowed their heads in sorrowful silence. An inscription on the monument read: 'Lest you forget!'

"On that very day when appeals for peace were made in Paris and tribute was paid to the memory of the victims of Nazism, Britain, France and Israel unleashed aggression against Egypt. Hundreds of bombs were dropped on peaceful civilians and Israeli tanks moved along the Sinai Peninsula. I learned of this as I was leaving the square. I was outraged by the treachery: we who had gathered to pay homage to the memory of murdered people became involuntary witnesses of a tragic farce."

Since then General Dragunsky has been an active fighter against Zionism.

The life of David Dragunsky is a striking example of the great process of human liberation which began with the Great October 1917 Socialist Revolution in Russia. He was born in the small town of Svyatsk on the border of the Ukraine and Byelo-

russia. The family moved from one village to another; his father hardly managed to make both ends meet by working at his sewing machine for 18-20 hours a day. "The life of my parents before the revolution was one of hardship and privation," General Dragunsky recalls. "Providing for a family of twelve was no easy task. The October Revolution opened a new way for millions of people. My family did not hesitate to follow the new path. Not only Russians, but also Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Poles and Jews had always lived together in my native village. From generation to generation our fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers respected one another despite all the attempts of tsarism to foment chauvinism and national hatred. They were bound together by poverty, age-long poverty. The revolution put an end to poverty and enslavement. The collective farm named 'International' united all the inhabitants of the big village. The Young Communist (Komsomol) group, the school and the Young Pioneer organisation rallied together young people of many nationalities. International weddings were quite frequent in the village before the war. Not only the collective farm as a whole but individual families became international."

After finishing secondary school David went to Moscow to continue his education: he wanted to be a writer. He took an active part in Komsomol work. In 1930 he became a candidate member [1] of

[1] To become a member of the Communist Party one first joins the Party as a candidate member for a one-year probationary period during which one cannot vote at Party meetings. After one year a candidate may become a full member of the Party upon the latter's approval and can thercafter take part in voting at Party meetings.

the Communist Party (Bolsheviks)—AUCP(B) [1]—and in 1931 he became a full Party member. At the height of the collectivisation campaign [2] Dragunsky headed the village Soviet (council) of Akhmatovo of the Molovski District (Kalinin Region). The peasants of Akhmatovo were the first in their district to form a collective farm, on May 7, 1931.

Two years later Dragunsky was called to the army. He served as a private in the 4th Infantry Regiment, then was sent to the junior commander course of the armoured troops, which had just been set up in Saratov. On November 7, 1936 David Dragunsky was given the first officer rank of Junior Lieutenant and sent to command a tank company in the Far Eastern Military District. The situation in the Soviet Far East was very tense at that time. The Japanese militarists had occupied the northern regions of China; they made no secret of their territorial ambitions in regard to the Soviet Union and staged military provocations from time to time. In the summer of 1938 the Japanese command launched a broad offensive in the area of Lake Khasan. Junior Lieutenant Dragunsky took part in the fighting and was wounded. The aggressive Japanese venture ended in complete failure. For his valour on the battlefield David Dragunsky was awarded

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[1] In connection with the formation of the USSR in 1922 and the adoption of the USSR Constitution in 1924 the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) was renamed the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)–AUCP(B); it was given its present name, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), in 1952.

[2] In the Soviet Union collectivisation of agriculture consisted in socialist reorganisation of agriculture through the voluntary merging of small individual farms to form large collective farms.

the Order of the Red Banner,[1] the first of his numerous decorations.

He was recalled from the Far East and enrolled in the Frunze Military Academy. (The war broke out when he was in his final year at the academy, and so he received his graduation diploma only in 1945.) On June 22, 1941, when Nazi Germany treacherously attacked the Soviet Union, Dragunsky was among the defenders of the Osovets Fortress on the river Bug near the Soviet Union's western border and was therefore among the first to take on the assault of the Hitlerites. He says with pride: "I fought from the first to the last day of the war."

During the first tragic months of the war the Red Army was forced to retreat, but in November the enemy was stopped near Moscow. The counter-offensive that followed averted the threat to the Soviet capital and threw the enemy back. The "blitzkrieg" had failed. Then there was fighting, and more fighting... David Dragunsky courageously fought at different sections of the front and in the third year of the war he already commanded a regiment. During the Battle of Kursk in July 1943, which was the greatest tank encounter in history, he was wounded once again. After the battle he was awarded the second Order of the Red Banner and the medal "For Valour". On his discharge from hospital Dragunsky commanded the 55th Guards Tank Brigade. He was wounded again in December 1943 during a raid in the enemy rear near Kiev, then received his third Order of the Red

[1] The Order of the Red Banner was the first Soviet order, instituted in 1918. It has been one of the highest and most honoured military decorations in the Civil War (1918-20), the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) and at the present time.

Banner and the rank of colonel. In June 1944 Colonel of Guards Dragunsky took part in crossing the river Vistula. On September 23, 1944 he was made Hero of the Soviet Union.

At this time, news of the tragic fate of his family reached him. He learned that the Nazis who had captured his native village had killed all of his relatives: his father, mother and nephews, on January 25, 1942.

Colonel Dragunsky in his "T-34" tank No. 200 took part in the liberation of Poland (he was one of the liberators of Auschwitz prisoners), in the fighting on German territory and in the historic Battle for Berlin. His brigade considerably contributed to the final rout of the Nazis. Immediately after the capture of Berlin it was sent to Czechoslovakia and participated in liberating Prague.

In 1945 David Dragunsky was awarded the second Gold Star of Hero of the Soviet Union. He received the decoration from the hands of Mikhail Kalinin, Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet. After that he served in Austria and Germany. In 1947 Dragunsky enrolled in the Academy of the General Staff and upon the graduation in 1950 continued his military service in Transbaikalia. From 1953 Major General Dragunsky commanded a tank division. In the spring of 1957 he was appointed chairman of the examination commission of the Kiev Tank Officer School, then served in the Armenian Republic where he was elected a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia and a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR. In 1964 General Dragunsky was appoined commander of the Transcaucasian Military District and moved to Tbilisi, capital of the Georgian Republic. In the

summer of 1969 he became commander of the higher officer courses "Vystrel" in Solnechnogorsk near Moscow. The courses, attended by senior officers and generals, are highly prestigious. Along with his duties as the head of the "Vystrel" courses Colonel-General David Dragunsky has been for many years engaged in public activities. He is an active participant in the peace movement. David Dragunsky was a delegate of the 22nd, 25th and 26th Party congresses, and since 1971 he has been a member of the CPSU Central Auditing Commission. [1]

In 1956 General Dragunsky became actively involved in the fight against the ideology of racism and discrimination and in the struggle against warmongers. His desire to play an active role in the peace movement and thereby help influence world developments was further strengthened by the "six-day war" unleashed by the Israeli aggressors in June 1967 and the occupation of Palestine and other Arab lands.

"I often asked myself," says David Dragunsky, "wherein lie the reasons, the roots of unbridled racism which had not so long ago brought so much sorrow to the peoples of Europe and death to millions of Jews. Is mankind's memory so short that the horrors of Babi Yar, Auschwitz and Buchenwald, the Warsaw ghetto and Lidice have already been forgotten? I could not remain indifferent to the sufferings of the Arab people oppressed by Israeli invaders; I could not calmly watch the revival of Nazi ideology and the propagation of racist policies. As a Soviet Communist born into a toiling Jew-

[1] The Central Auditing Commission is elected by a Party congress along with the Central Committee as the highest controlling body of the CPSU.

ish family I could not understand how the masses of Israeli people could allow themselves to be duped by delirious nationalistic ideas and blindly follow the Zionist leaders and extremists....

"Soviet power opened before all peoples the road to a free life, work and culture. The doors of schools, colleges and universities are open to young people of all nationalities of our country. I have been with the Soviet Army for more than 50 years and know it to be the most international army in the world. In the brigade which I commanded during the war men of 28 nationalities lived and fought together like one big family. Russians and Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Uzbeks, Georgians and Jews, Tatars and Letts fought shoulder to shoulder in the life-and-death struggle against fascism, for the freedom and independence of our homeland, and later fulfilled their internationalist duty by liberating the peoples of Europe from the 'brown plague'. In times of war and in times of peace internationalism remains an inalienable part of Soviet people. They have as high a respect for the people of Israel as for other peoples, and wish them a peaceful future and prosperity. At the same time they resolutely condemn the expansionist policy of the Israeli aggressors.... I took part in the liberation of the Babi Yar and Auschwitz death camps. My family was murdered by the Nazis, and I cannot remain indifferent to the killing and victimisation of innocent people. I love the Jewish people, but I cannot bear to see some of them commit grievous crimes."

General David Dragunsky, who is 75, devotes his energy to his work in the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion. When asked what was the most important influence in his life, he said: "I owe

everything to the Great October Socialist Revolution, the Soviet system, the Leninist Communist Party whose member I have been for 54 years. Tell me, in what other country can a person born into a large Jewish family, the son of a poor village tailor, graduate from two military academies, become a general and win the highest government awards?"

ПРАВДА И ТОЛЬКО ПРАВДА
на английском языке
Цена 30 коп.

TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH